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THE OBSERVATOR.

Of the Militia. The Country-man *turn'd Coward, and declines Fighting.*

From Wednesday December the 27th, to Saturday December the 30th, 1704.

Country-m. MAfter *Obſervator*, I muſt deſire you to continue your Diſcourſe relating to the Militia, and let us know its firſt Eſtabliſhment, how alter'd, and on what Foot it ſtands at preſent.

Obſ. In the Times of our *Saxon* Anceſtors, the Title of the Commander in Chief of the Militia was *Heretock*, afterwards *Dux* or *Duke*, the latter of which, in Time, dwindl'd to a meer Title.

This Leader, or Commander in Chief, was Choſen in the Field, either at the *Wittagenmote* or the *Folkmote*, being carried upon a Shield, born on their Shoulders, as are now our Knights of the Shire. *Tacitus Ll.* Edw. *cap.* 34.

This Aſſembly that made the Choice I take to be a Free Parliament, for ſome Preſidents run thus, *Commune Concilium Seniorum & Populorum totius Regni*, not only Lords but Commons; for the Council of *Winton*, Anno 855, is ſaid to be held in the Preſence of the Great Men, *Aliorumq; Fidelum infinita Multitudo. Concil.* Brit. 219. *Ingulphus*, &c.

This Cuſtom continued long after the *Norman*, and how it came afterwards to be put into the Hands of the King, is a Subject that would prove Invidious, and perhaps not ſuitable to the Intent of this Diſcourſe: Yet, tho' the Militia be in the Hand of the King, it is there Legally, and under the Reſtrictions of Parliament. *Edward* the Third, in his War with *Scotland*, telleth the World, That he held it unreaſonable to enter upon the managing of an Offenſive Foreign War, without the Concurrence of the common Conſent of the People.

The Arrays are aſſerted by the Statute at *Winton*, which is confirmed by *Edward* III. in full Parliament, wherein he willeth, *That no Man ſhall be urged to Arm himſelf otherwiſe than he was wont in the Times of his Anceſtors, Kings of* England. 1 Edw. 3. *cap.* 5. *Stat.* 2. By another Law in the Reign of the ſame King, it was Ordained, *That no Man ſhall be conſtrained to find Men of Arms, Hoblers, nor Archers, other than thoſe which hold by ſuch Services, if it be not by common Conſent and Grant made in Parliament.* 25 *Edw.* 3. Stat. 5. Cap. 8.

Country-m. Maſter *Obſervator*, I don't underderſtand theſe Old Warriours, nor don't much care to be acquainted with the New ones. But what ſort of Fighting Fellows were theſe Hoblers?

Obſ. Hoblers were the ſame as we now call Light-Horſemen; 'tis a Word quite worn out in all the Counties of *England*, but is continued to this Day in the Iſle of *Wight*, and there the Hobler is the Perſon that carries the Summons to the Soldiery for their Appearance in Arms.

Country-m. Well, I'll be a Light-Horſeman, a Hobler; for I ſhould love to have a fleet Beaſt under me when I came to Engage; for if I find I am like to loſe the Day, I fancy I ſhould Hobble Homewards as faſt as I could.

Obſ. I thought thou hadſt been a Man of better Courage. My *Country-man* turn'd a *Coward!*

Country-m. Look'ye, Maſter, I can Towel, or ſo; I can venture a Broken Pate at Cudgels, or a Broken Shin at Foot-Ball; but this Fighting with Swords and Guns is the Devil; and the Devil take him that Invented it, for *Roger*: Why 'twou'd Vex a Man to the Heart to have his Soul Beat out of his Body with a Bullet no bigger than a Horſe-Bean; to Riſe a Brisk Bonny Fellow in the Morning, and before Night to lye on the Ground, making Ugly Faces, and Kicking and Sprawling like a Rabbit. I proteſt I had rather lye in Bed and Be-piſs my ſelf, than go to the Wars and be Shot into a Ditch, and there Drowned in my own Blood, that's like your fine Gentlefolks Stewing of Carps.

Obſ. Thou Abominable Coward, I thought thou hadſt been a good *Engliſhman.*

Country-m. So I am, and yet I don't love Fighting: I told you I lov'd Fighting Stories, that is I lov'd to Read 'em upon the Queens Gazette; but I tell you I don't care to be a Fool in the Play, on the Theater of *Mars*. I'll commend the Fighting Men, and ſet 'em on, but will never come to part 'em.

Obſ. Then the Queen will want a Soldier of thee, if the *French* or *Scots* ſhould Invade *England.*

Country-m. Aye that ſhe wou'd; but ſhe'll never want a Friend of *Roger*; I'll Work for her, I'll Plow, Sow and Thraſh to get Money for Her to Pay thoſe Fellows that have a mind to be kill'd, and in doing that I think I am a good Subject; I'll never run away from my Plough and my Cart, but I much queſtion if I ſhou'd not run away from my Colours, rather than ſtay to be Kill'd.

Obſ. Pompa Mortis magis terret, quam Mors ipſa, the terrible Apprehenſions of Fighting, thou haſt form'd to thy ſelf, are worſe by far than Fighting, or even Death it ſelf. Men that are Brave, and enter the Liſt of War in the Purſuit of Honour, or what is yet a Nobler Engagement, for the Good and Safety of the Queen and Realm, they never think of Death, but go on with a Reſolution to Conquer, and if it be their Fate to be Kill'd, they Dye in the Bed of Honour, a Death far more Eligible than an Inglorious Life.

Country-m. Maſter, I don't well underſtand that Buſineſs of Honour; but let it be what it will, I had rather Live than Dye in its Bed. I have Read the Play you Lent me call'd *the Rehearſal*, and in it there is like to be a ſad Bloody Engagement betwixt the two Kings of *Brentford*, for the Regal Dignity; but you muſt know that

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one of these Kings was woundily in Love with Madam *Somebody*, and when he came to Arm himself for the Battel, and was going to put on his Boots, on that occasion, there happen'd a sad Dispute betwixt Love and Honour: Honour would have him put on both Boots, but Love would not suffer him to put on one; so in the like manner, should I go to Equip my self for the War, there would rise a woundy Dispute about it: You know I have a Pestilent Kindness for my Wife *Joan*, and so has she for me; now she will say, Roger *don't put on thy Boots, for Love Commands thee to stay at Home:* Then I must say, *I will put on my Boots, for Honour Commands me to the Wars:* And between you and I, I believe, I shou'd be so long in putting my Boots on till the Battel would be over first. Nor do I think my self the only Coward in *England*, for some of your Flaming Honour-Men were but putting on their Boots here, when the Duke of *Marlborough* was Fighting in *Germany*; and now perhaps, they can go to *Nottingham* and *Litchfield*, well Booted and Spur'd, and after having seen the *French* Prisoners can say, *How many Brave Generals We have Taken.* And even so can I do, I can sit, like the Fly on the Axle-Tree of the Chariot, and say *What a Smoke do we make?*

Master, let every Man keep his own Station; let the Parsons Pray for the Government, you Write for the Government, and the Soldiers Fight for the Government; but if all would Unite for the Government, there would be no occasion of Writing or Fighting, or Working, or Toiling to Pay Taxes; but we shou'd have a Happy People under a Happy Queen; She wou'd enjoy Her Rights, and we ours; we should Live together like an Indulgent Mother, and like Dutiful Children in one House, Blest with all the Comforts of Humane Life, and in a condition to prepare our selves for a better: What is the meaning of this Noise and Jealousie about the *Scots?* Does it not proceed from Dis-Union? What is the Reason that a Union is so earnestly press'd, and become the Care of Parliaments? Is it not that some People have made Breaches? And must we have Thousands of Lives Lost, Thousands of Men Destroy'd, for every one of whose Souls our Saviour has Dy'd, to Repair those Breaches? No, God forbid! Somebody or other, in Eminent Stations, have occasioned these Breaches and Divisions; and be they *Scots* or *English* that have done it, let them be Punish'd for it, in Gods Name, as a Terror to the Workers of Mischief in after Ages.

Is it not a hard thing, Master, that I, who am now stricken in Years, shou'd be Insulted by you, for declining Fighting in these Times; I have liv'd Peaceably on my own Farm, and have Eaten and Drank of the Fruits of my own Labour and Toil: I have never heard, nor do I love the hoarse Musick of Drums and Trumpets, but the Rural Sounds of the Horn-Pipe or Fiddle; must I forgoe my Ease, my Woods, my Shades, my Flocks and Herds, for the Rude Entertainments of Camps and Armies? God Divert this Omen from the Land; however keep the Effects of it from my Habitation; I have not been a Partner in the Sin that has procur'd these Misfortunes, and why then shou'd I be a Sharer in the Punishment? Must I be made a Stoker, and Blow the Bellows to the Men of Strife and Contention against my Will, when my chief Design is Unity, and my Hearty Prayers is for the Peace of our *Israel*. What have I to do with the Contenders for Empire, with those that Dispute the Right of Collonies Abroad, that Plough the Ocean in Brittle Ships, to compass the Trade of the Universe? Our Rural Entertainments need none of their Embellishments. The Product of my Hive affords as good Sweets as the best of their Sugars; my Crab-Tree produces a Sower-Juice beyond that of their Lemons or Oranges; my Back is better Cloath'd with Cloth, Kerseys or Drugget, than they with their Silks and Tissues; and my *Joan*'s Home-spun Aprons are far beyond the Muslins of *India*. Let 'em contend for Riches if they please; but let 'em not make Divisions and Breaches to be made whole again at the Expence of other People.

Obj. Indeed, Honest *Country-man*, it could be wish'd that the Estates of such, who by ill Advice, are the Occasions of Wars and Divisions, should be Confiscated to the Common Treasury, and be apply'd to the use of the War. But when Calamities are coming upon a Nation, let it come by what means soever, 'tis the Business of a People by Policy to avoid the Blow, or by Force to Repel it. And this is the Concern of every *Englishman*, and 'tis my Opinion that no Person ought to have protection of a Government, that will not, in some measure, contribute towards its Support.

For my part I don't wonder at the prospect of Future Troubles. I pray God disappoint the Designs of our Enemies, who have met with too much Lenity from a Government they have design'd to destroy. The *Papists* and *Nonjurors* that have written against the Government, that have been the Trumpeters of *Sedition*, have been pass'd over with *Impunity*; when *Protestants*, my self for Instance, who have written in Defence of the Government against these Libellers, have had the Edge of the Law turn'd against 'em.

Country-m. Master 'tis very true, I remember the time when you were Indicted at the *Old Baily*, for giving the People of *England* Notice, of what at this time Occasions the Debates of both Houses of Parliament.

Obj. And I have been, and am now Prosecuted, for what has been adjudged Matter of Fact by both Houses of Parliament; which, in a Considerate Age, would open the Eyes of Men, to see which way the Tide lies.

Country-m. And yet, Sir, you see how difficult it is to get a Jury of your Fellow Citizens, that will acquit you of being a Libeller, and Guilty of Sedition.

Obj. I am bound to serve them, and the Cause of my Country for all that. But, Honest *Roger*, wilt thou not go for a Soldier if need be?

Country-m. My Stomach is not that way enclin'd; I shall want my *October*, my *Beef* and *Bag-Pudding*, without which I can't Fight. Come, Master, let us take one Bumper to the Queen, and I'll go and Consult with my Pillow about Fighting.

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